UNITED NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.109/1149
7 May 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

MILITARY ACTIVITIES AND ARRANGEMENTS BY COLONIAL POWERS IN TERRITORIES UNDER THEIR ADMINISTRATION WHICH MIGHT BE IMPEDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

GUAM

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

A. General

1. The United States Air Force and Navy maintain military installations on Guam; the Coast Guard and the Army Corps of Engineers also have facilities there. More than 16,188 hectares, or about 30 per cent of the island's total area, are reserved for the use of the Department of Defense. In addition, the military controls approximately 324 hectares of "land-locked properties", according to information submitted by the Organization of People for Indigenous Rights of Guam to the Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance, at its 642nd meeting, on 1 May 1992. 1/

2. In 1991/1992, there were 10,044 active duty military personnel on Guam compared to a figure of 9,688 in January 1990. During the period under review, the military personnel were comprised of the following: Navy, 6,866; Air Force, 2,636; Army, 56; Marines, 344; and Coast Guard, 142. There were, in addition, 11,129 dependants and 1,341 military retirees. 2/

3. The transfer to Guam of military personnel as a result of the closing of Subic Bay Naval Base and the Cubi Point Naval Air Station in the Philippines was expected to return the total number of military personnel in the Territory to the 1989 level. In 1989, prior to the removal of the B-52 squadrons from Guam and the relocation of personnel, there were 10,699 military personnel. 2/

4. Military spending, which is a major source of revenue for the Territory, amounted to over US$ 481 million in 1991/1992. 3/

5. For many years, Andersen Air Force Base was the major military installation on Guam, home to the 43rd Bombardment Wing of the Third Division. That group included nuclear-capable B-52 bombers, which were deployed within the framework of Strategic Air Command operations in the Pacific and Asia. In May 1988, Air Force officials announced that the 43rd Bombardment Wing at Andersen Air Force Base had been deactivated.

6. Andersen Air Force Base has been for some time a prime emergency landing site in the Pacific for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration space shuttle programme. Its facilities are being upgraded to accommodate specialized equipment.

7. A 16-hectare landfill on Andersen Air Force Base has been classified as a hazardous and toxic waste site. The landfill is located over Guam's aquifer, the Territory's sole source of drinking water. The Environmental Protection Agency has allocated $28 million to assist in clean-up efforts, the second highest allocation made to any Pacific air base. The Air Force plans to close the site completely by the year 2000. 4/

8. As previously reported in document A/AC.109/1070, there are a number of naval facilities on Guam: the Santa Rita Naval Magazine; the naval air stations at Brewer Field and Apra Harbour; the naval communications station at Barrigada and the communications annex at Finegayan; and the naval processing station at Ritedian Point. Guam is also a base for the repair, maintenance and provisioning of the Seventh Fleet and Polaris submarines, as well as the home port of five naval vessels. On 30 September 1991, the Secretary of the Navy announced that the naval facility at Ritedian Point would be closed. This closure is expected to open access to private beach properties owned by Guamanians. 5/

9. The Naval Communication Area Master Station, located on Guam since 1906, coordinates all naval communications in Japan, the Philippines, Australia and Diego Garcia and provides fleet communications support to ships operating in the western Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean.

10. The territorial Government has requested the consolidation of the 890-hectare Agana Naval Air Station with the 8,903-hectare Andersen Air Force Base (11.3 kilometres away) to allow for expanded use of the facilities by the civilian airport, which currently shares the area and facilities with the Agana Naval Air Station. Guamanian officials contend that the airport needs to be expanded to accommodate increasing numbers of civilian flights. 6/ Members of the House Armed Services Committee visited Guam in December 1990 and July 1991 to re-examine the proposed consolidation.

11. According to a report issued by the Guam Bureau of Planning, closure of the base would facilitate expansion of the airport which would allow more tourists to visit the island. The report stated that "the military, once the linchpin of Guam's economy, is in some ways becoming a constraint" that could be eased by the return of underutilized lands and installations held by the military. The report considered it a "burden that can be eased by the more efficient use of

military property on Guam through consolidation of the Navy and Air Force operations at Anderson Air Force Base". 6/

12. Having observed that Guam was not listed among military installations slated for closure in March 1993, Mr. Robert Underwood, the Guamanian delegate to the United States House of Representatives, said that Guam would appeal to have the Naval Air Station at Agana included in the final list of bases to be closed. 6/

13. The Governor of Guam has reportedly reiterated that there was no military justification for keeping the Agana Naval Station open since naval activities at Agana were almost non-existent. 7/ According to press reports, however, the naval station continues to employ 1,882 military personnel and 804 civilians. In 1992, more than 29,000 military flights landed at the air station. 6/ The Governor considered that the base would better serve the Territory if it was converted to civilian use, and stressed that the occupation of much of Guam's real estate by the military was an economic hindrance. 7/

14. According to press reports, the Chamorro Nation, a group of political activists, has stepped up demonstrations and sit-ins at United States military bases on Guam, demanding the return of land that has not been put to use since the Air Force and Navy began scaling back operations. 8/

15. A United States Coast Guard cutter, the 34-metre Assateague, has been based in Guam since November 1990 to conduct search-and-rescue missions.

16. One thousand troops from Guam participated in Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm.

17. The question of the transfer of excess military land to the Government of Guam for economic development has been under continuous review by the military since 1977 (see A/AC.109/1069, paras. 42-48).

B. Action taken by the General Assembly

18. On 25 November 1992, the General Assembly adopted resolution 47/27 B, section VI of which related to Guam. The Assembly, inter alia, noted that the second round of negotiations between the United States Government and the Government of Guam aimed at the transfer of land and facilities at the Agana Naval Air Station, opened in July 1991. It called upon the administering Power to continue to ensure that the presence of military bases and installations in the Territory should not constitute an obstacle to implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples nor hinder the population from exercising its right to self-determination, including independence in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

C. Position of the administering Power

19. In a statement to the Subcommittee on Small Territories at its 636th meeting, on 29 July 1991, the representative of the United States said that senior federal and military officials had maintained a continuing dialogue with territorial leaders regarding the consolidation of military bases and the return of excess land.

Notes

1/ United Nations press release, GA/COL/2833, 1 May 1992.

2/ 1991 Guam Annual Economic Review, pp. 31 and 103.

3/ The local currency is the United States dollar (US$).

4/ Pacific Daily News, 16 October 1992.

5/ 1991 Guam Annual Economic Review, p. 33.

6/ Pacific Daily News, 13 March 1993.

7/ Radio Australia "News Summary", 15 March 1993.

8/ The Washington Post, 10 February 1993.